



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar
gyfer Datblygu Gwledig;
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



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Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020

Expression of Interest (EOI) Guidance Notes

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Information on the EOI Process	3
Outline of the two stage application process	4
Timescale	6
Funds Available	6
How to apply	6

INTRODUCTION

1. These Guidance Notes explain how the Expression of Interest (EOI) process for the **Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020** will be operated and how proposals will be selected at this stage which would then be invited to submit full applications.
2. Please read these notes carefully. You will also need to refer to
 - the specific EOI Criteria and Application Form for the scheme.
 - the Guidance Note for the Scheme.

These can be found at the web address below:

3. <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/wales-rural-development-programme-2014-2020/?lang=en>

INFORMATION ON THE EOI PROCESS:

4. It is a European Commission requirement that measures in the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 are not delivered on a first past the post system. To meet this requirement it is intended that the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 schemes will open and close for applications periodically through the life of the 2014-2020 programme, dependent on available financial allocations.
5. The application process for Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 socio-economic schemes will be in two stages. The first stage will be an Expressions of Interest (EOI). Applicants that are successful at EOI stage will be invited to the second stage which is to submit a full application.
6. When funds are limited, a number of factors must be considered when deciding how to allocate grant support. These include:
 - Managing expectations about the likelihood of success
 - Offering an equal opportunity for applicants to apply
 - Having an open and transparent process for considering proposals
7. EOI applications will be submitted in direct competition with one another and it is expected that there will be significant demand for the grant available. Businesses will be invited to submit outline proposals for new investments. Third Sector organisations and other bodies such as colleges or universities will be invited to submit outline proposals for projects. Those proposals will be assessed against

criteria that will demonstrate the expected value of the investment and the contribution that is expected to be made towards the objectives of the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

8. These guidance notes set out how that process is expected to work and how to apply.

OUTLINE OF THE TWO STAGE APPLICATION PROCESS

9. The application process will be in two stages. The first stage will be to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). The Applicant must provide an outline of the proposed project investment explaining how the project will deliver against each of the assessment criteria for that EOI window. Applicants that are successful at EOI stage will be invited to second stage to submit a Full Application.

First stage – EOI

10. Specific EOI criteria will be set for each scheme which will be published in advance on the WG website (see link above). The criteria are designed to sift potential applications in line with key Welsh Government (WG) and Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 priorities. The criteria may change over time or for particular windows in order to reflect any changes in WG policy priorities. Any changes will be published in advance on the WG website.
11. The high level objective of the Scheme is to provide support that will achieve the aims of the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 by increasing the GDP in the rural economy and the criteria that have been set are intended to have that as a focus. It is up to the applicant to explain in sufficient detail how the proposed investment will deliver against that objective and against the specific criteria
12. For each EOI window eligible businesses or organisations are invited to submit an EOI for their outline proposals for new investments or projects. Those proposals will be assessed against the published criteria that will demonstrate the expected value of the investment and the contribution that is expected to be made towards the objectives of the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.
13. The EOI's will be assessed, scored and ranked in order of merit according to the published selection criteria. Project proposals will be selected in ranked order until either the funds available have been allocated or the maximum number of applications has been reached. There is no guarantee that all of the funds will be allocated or that the maximum number of projects will be invited.

14. Each proposal will be assessed only on the basis of the explanation given in the EOI Application Form against the priority criteria set out in the specific EOI guidance for the Scheme and EOI application window that you are applying for.
15. Only the information contained within the EOI will be considered. No additional information or documentation will be accepted. The assessment will be made on the information provided and if that is not clear no requests will be made for clarification or additional explanations.
16. EOI's must be received by WG by the closure date. Any EOI not received by that closing date cannot be considered for that round.
17. Any EOI forms that are not fully completed will be rejected.
18. EOI Applications should be submitted via email, the relevant address will be found within the specific scheme EOI guidance.
19. There is no guarantee that applicants will have their proposals accepted at this stage.
20. Following the appraisal of the EOI, you will be notified with one of 2 outcomes;
 - a. Your proposal has been selected to go to the next stage and you will be invited to submit a full application.
 - b. Your project has not been selected to go to the next stage
Rejection of a proposal at EOI stage does not preclude that proposal being re-submitted for future EOI windows.

Second stage – Full application

21. Once a proposal has passed the EOI stage the applicant will be invited to prepare and submit a full second stage application for their proposed project, along with supporting documentation such as business or project development plan, previous accounts (where appropriate); financial projections and cash flows and other information as may be necessary.
22. Second stage applications must be submitted online via the WEFO online portal. Guidance will be provided to all applicants.
23. Second stage full applications must be submitted within six months of the notification to submit a full application.
24. The second stage application must be consistent with the proposals outlined in the approved EOI.

25. The second stage full application will be appraised in accordance with the Scheme Guidance and eligibility rules. They will be subject to full due diligence appraisal and eligibility checks and only at that point will a final decision be taken to offer a grant. There is no guarantee that a project proposal will be approved for grant funding.

TIMESCALE

26. It is expected that there will be at least two EOI windows each year for each scheme. Dates will be published on the WG website on a rolling two year basis, and are subject to review. This will enable applicants to forward plan their application to meet their project needs in terms of timescales.

27. EOI appraisal should be completed within 60 days of the EOI window closing.

28. Second stage full applications must be submitted within twelve months of the notification to submit a full application.

29. We aim to complete the appraisal of full applications within 90 working days of receipt of the full application. Appraisal of complex projects, or applications with eligibility issues may take longer. If you delay in replying to requests for further information this will extend the time.

30. You need to consider the implications of the timescales and come to a commercial decision about whether to seek grant aid for your investment or not. It is important that you carefully consider the timescale of both your proposed investment and the application and selection process so that this can be factored into your plans from the outset.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

31. An indicative amount of funding will be made available for each window. The amount will be published in advance on the WG website.

NUMBER OF SECOND STAGE FULL APPLICATIONS TO BE INVITED

32. The indicative number of full applications to be invited for each window will be published on the WG website. This is a maximum figure and the number invited may be less than this. For example if the funding available for the window is allocated to fewer, larger proposals.

HOW TO APPLY

33. EOI Applications should be submitted via email. The relevant email address is in the specific EOI Criteria and Application Form document.
34. EOI Applications may be submitted at any time throughout the EOI window. The window closing dates will be different for each scheme.
35. Please note that all the information must be provided within the EOI form. Additional documents or supporting information will not be accepted at EOI stage.

General Data Protection Regulation: Privacy Notice

36. The information provided in the expression of interest application and full applications is subject to the [Privacy Notice](#). The Privacy Notice explains the Welsh Government's processing and use of your personal data and your rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

